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The Policy and Plan for Elephant Management in Zimbabwe



THE POLICY AND PLAN FOR ELEPHANT MANAGEMENT IN ZIMBABWE

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1. POLICY FOR ELEPHANT MANAGEMENT IN ZIMBABWE

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 This policy statement and the elephant management plan are the outcome of a workshop "Zimbabwe Elephant Management Framework" that was held on 13 January 1997 at Boulton Atlantica Conservation Education Centre, Harare. The workshop is one of the four that were organised by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management to review wildlife management strategies in Zimbabwe. The other three workshops focused on:

- Rhino management
- CAMPFIRE and Conservancies
- Biodiversity Conservation.

1.1.2 The four workshops had two key features:

- At least three international experts in each field were requested to review and comment on relevant literature on each topic. This was sent to the experts before the workshop. The comments together with the literature served as background material for the workshop.
- Stakeholders participated in the workshop. The recommendations from the workshop were therefore a result of a broad based consultation on issues of wildlife management in Zimbabwe.

1.1.3 Why was there a need for the review? Wildlife management is a process and the need to capture this element is significant. A lot of changes outlined below have taken place in Zimbabwe and these have imposed new challenges.

- Zimbabwe's wildlife industry has grown tremendously since the promulgation of the Parks and Wild Life Act of 1975 and subsequent amendments. These events paved the way for alienated landholders and Rural District Councils to derive economic benefits from wildlife on their properties. Under the CAMPFIRE program 26 Districts are involved in wildlife based projects. The growth of the wildlife industry outside the National Parks Estate now covers about 17% of the country bringing the total area under wildlife in the country to approximately 30%. The area under wildlife is set to increase as more and more alienated landholders adopt wildlife management as a landuse option. The Government of Zimbabwe regards wildlife utilisation as a valuable, legitimate and sustainable form of landuse which may be the most appropriate form of development in many areas that are agriculturally marginal. The Government will promote the economic value of wildlife. Market values are determined through auctions and these will also determine compensation values.

- The growth of the wildlife industry outside the Parks Estate has meaningfully enhanced rural productivity and natural resource conservation. Wildlife is a unique economic resource. Its main advantage is its ecological sustainability in comparison to other landuses. Wildlife makes better use of available vegetation compared to livestock and has many marketable uses in addition to meat production and for the country, the wildlife industry has a competitive advantage in world markets. This is due to the presence of unique large mammals and a remarkable biological diversity. This increases marketing opportunities.

Rural areas which are characterised by poverty, continue to absorb the greater proportion of human population growth but have limited subsistence agricultural potential. The future in rural areas is bleak unless the whole issue of the sustainable use of wildlife is taken aboard.

- The tourism sector is growing tremendously and this is virtually based on the wildlife industry and landscapes. Tourism is the fastest growing economic sector in Zimbabwe. The demand on wildlife is for both consumptive and non-consumptive purposes.
- The growth of the wildlife industry has stimulated employment opportunities, and produces valuable products for manufacturing and trade.
- The growth of the industry has brought to the forefront other critical issues for consideration. In what agro-ecological regions should wildlife be allowed? What about the spread of foot and mouth disease? What are the effects on food security? How should conservancies be regulated? etc.

1.1.4 These issues have raised both national and international debate and present new challenges that need to be addressed continuously.

2. ISSUES AFFECTING THE ZIMBABWE ELEPHANT POPULATION

The elephant presents a different set of issues from the other large mammals.

- 2.1 The African elephant was placed on Appendix I of the Cites Convention at the 7th meeting of the Cites Conference of the Parties in Lausanne in 1989. This followed concern for the survival of the elephant by the international community following the reduction of the African elephant over most of Africa in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of poaching for ivory.

This concern and the subsequent ban on the trade in elephants and their products failed to take into account the situation in Southern Africa. The ban was imposed despite massive objections from the Southern African states. Emotions, from people far removed from the reality in the region played a critical role in the imposition and maintenance of the ban.

- 2.2 The elephant population in Zimbabwe is very high and stands at 66 000. The scientific

technique used to arrive at these numbers is aerial censuring. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management carries out censuses in the National Parks areas - Sebungwe, Matebeleland North, the Zambezi Valley and Gonarezhou. WWF conducts aerial surveys in communal areas.

- 2.3 The scientific validity of the technique has been verified by an independent survey of the Gonarezhou National Park soon after a survey by the Department.
- 2.4 The elephant population is high due to effective management measures and the philosophy of sustainable use.
- 2.5 Population sizes are also strong in other Southern African countries. Southern African countries support 200 - 230 000 elephants. These are located in an area that covers 22% of the region. Elephant populations in the region comprise 33% of the continental population.
- 2.6 The large elephant numbers in Zimbabwe constitute a problem. The problem of elephant numbers first surfaced in the early 1960s. Population reductions were carried out through culling operations. The first cull of 500 elephants was carried out in 1966/67. The last large cull was conducted in 1989.
- 2.7 Despite culling operations, poaching and natural mortality, the elephant population has grown at a rate of 2.5% per year.
- 2.8 Because of the feeding habits and the large numbers of elephants, the ecological issues facing managers in Zimbabwe are serious. Elephants are capable of radically modifying habitats. Destruction of trees leading to unacceptable habitat change is accelerating. One elephant can knock down 1 500 trees in a year. In the period 1974 to 1978, due to elephant activities, there was a 4% reduction in woodland per year in the Sengwa area.
- 2.9 The decline in vegetation cover leads to overall decline in biodiversity.
- 2.10 Should elephants be left to die as they destroy their own habitats. Many say this is a natural phenomenon and should be allowed.
Die-offs have the following implications:
 - 2.10.1 Waste of protein when in fact there is great need for it.
 - 2.10.2 Negative impact of tourism. A large die off will lead to accusations of mismanagement.
 - 2.10.3 Loss of income from skins and ivory.
 - 2.10.4 Build up of elephant outside the Parks Estate leading to increased conflicts with local people
 - 2.10.5 On ethical grounds, should we be allowed to let elephants die?

2.10.6 In the Hwange National Park about Z\$ 600 000.00 to Z\$ 800 000.00 is needed annually to pump water during the dry season.

2.10 (Continued)

2.10.7 Elephant products (hides and ivory) from previous culling operations, natural mortality and poaching are stockpiled and cannot be marketed effectively because of the CITES ban. Trade is taking place internally but this is on a low scale.

It is the above issues that have necessitated a review of elephant management strategies in Zimbabwe.

This document which is the outcome of this review, is Zimbabwe's current policy and strategy on elephant management, stating the Government's aspirations and intentions.

As a policy, the document gives overall guidelines on the management of elephants. The guidelines need to be followed by detailed management plans.

3. THE POLICY STATEMENT:

The Government recognises that elephants comprise an important component of Zimbabwe's wildlife and cultural heritage, and wishes to conserve elephants at levels which promote the goals of biodiversity conservation while ensuring their sustainable use and their contribution to national development through the following:

- 3.1 Maintaining at least four demographically and genetically viable populations.
- 3.2 Maintaining numbers and densities below levels which will not compromise biodiversity.
- 3.3 Maintaining or increasing elephant range at or above the 1996 level.
- 3.4 Maintaining continuity in research and monitoring necessary for the conservation and management of elephants.
- 3.5 Establishing sustainable funding programmes to build and maintain necessary human resources (staffing levels and capacity) and strengthen elephant management capacity.
- 3.6 Strengthening partnerships and stakeholder programmes to facilitate the equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of elephant management and conservation.
- 3.7 Minimising human/elephant conflicts.

3.8 Improving public awareness of elephant management and conservation issues and the value of elephants with activities targeted for domestic, regional and international audiences.

3.9 Ensuring effective trade control measures and enforcement.

3.10 Liaising with other elephant range states in the region.

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4. ZIMBABWE ELEPHANT MANAGEMENT PLAN

4.1 GOAL STATEMENT:

Recognising that elephants comprise an important component of Zimbabwe's wildlife and cultural heritage, conserve elephants at levels which promote the goals of biodiversity conservation while ensuring their sustainable use and their contribution to national development by :

- (a) Maintaining at least four demographically and genetically viable populations.
- (b) Maintaining numbers and densities below levels which will not compromise biodiversity.
- (c) Maintaining or increasing elephant range at or above the 1996 level.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE ONE

Maintaining numbers and densities below levels which will compromise biodiversity

Management Actions

- (1) Define the ecological carrying capacity / preferred elephant density for each National Park.
- (2) Carry out periodic population reductions either through culling or trans-locations to keep the population within the ecological carrying capacity or preferred densities for each National Park.

OBJECTIVE TWO

Maintaining or increasing elephant range at or above the 1996 level.

Management Actions

- (1) Review the wildlife policy with a view to promote increased private use of wildlife.
- (2) Continue promoting the economic value of wildlife.
- (3) Review and strengthen the CAMPFIRE program with a view to increase the participation of communities in elephant management through the policy of sustainable utilisation thereby increasing community tolerance of elephants.
- (4) Liaise with the relevant Government Departments so that resettlement programmes

take into account the need to leave space as range for wildlife.

OBJECTIVE THREE

Maintain continuity in research and monitoring necessary for the conservation and management of elephants

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS:

- (1) Identify monitoring and research priorities at both national and regional levels.
- (2) Identify key variables to monitor in line with research priorities - i.e. indicators of biodiversity level changes, changes in trophy quality etc.
- (3) Establish monitoring methods and monitoring frequency.
- (4) Consolidate, analyse and synthesise available information.
- (5) Maintain collaborative research, monitoring and training programmes with relevant institutions.
- (6) Develop reports and recommendations against goal and objectives
- (7) Monitor implementation of management actions
- (8) Ensure regular national, provincial and national meetings between research and management
- (9) Cost and source (internal and external) funds and enhance capacity to maintain research and monitoring programmes.
- (10) Establish and maintain database for monitoring information.
- (11) Standardise data, reporting formats and data management procedures.
- (12) Develop and distribute annual (or semi-annual) operational plans for research, monitoring and training.

OBJECTIVE FOUR

Establish sustainable funding programmes to build and maintain necessary human resources (staffing levels and capacity) and strengthen elephant management capacity.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS:

A. Funding

- (1) Create mechanisms for generating, retaining and coordinating the distribution of elephant-related revenues for specific elephant conservation and management actions (whether carried out by DNPWLM or other implementation partners).
- (2) Develop criteria for priority disbursement of these revenues at a local and national level.

B. Human resources

- (1) Assess staffing needs for elephant conservation and management.
- (2) Assess capacity needs for elephant conservation and management.
- (3) Outsource services and tasks on the basis of cost-efficiency criteria.
- (4) Establish appropriate recruitment and training programmes to ensure continuity of trained staff in those elephant management and protection activities which must be undertaken by DNPWLM.

OBJECTIVE FIVE

Strengthen partnerships and stakeholder programmes to facilitate the equitable distribution of the costs and benefits of elephant management and conservation

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS:

A. Potential partners

- (1) Identify potential partners.
- (2) (collate) Identify goals of potential partners and identify common ground on elephant concerns with DNPWLM.
- (3) Identify availability of human resources and skills in potential partner organizations (ie. a database could be established).
- (4) Establish a liaison between the DNPWLM and potential partners (ie. DNPWLM could appoint a "contact" person).
- (5) Establish a joint coordination forum.
- (6) DNPWLM coordinate annual meetings of the forum for planning of joint elephant-

related activities (eg. surveys, public relations, supporting "local" capacity building).

- (7) At these meetings, agree on roles and responsibilities and an implementation plan.
- (8) DNPWLM and partners carry out assigned roles and responsibilities.
- (9) DNPWLM and partners review and report back to the joint coordination forum.

B. Other Stakeholders

- (1) Identify potential stakeholders
- (2) Identify goals of other stakeholders and identify common ground/concerns on elephant issues with DNPWLM.
- (3) Identify existing skills and resources in the field of elephant management and conservation.
- (4) Perform a needs assessment and identify possible means of support and assistance for the stakeholders (ie. from DNPWLM or other identified partners).
- (5) Establish joint coordination forum (eg. through local CAMPFIRE institutions, private land owner associations" and conservancy structures) and link, where possible, to A. 5. , above.
- (6) DNPWLM coordinates annual meetings of the forum for planning of joint elephant related activities (eg. surveys, quota setting, etc.).
- (7) At these meetings, agree on roles and responsibilities and an implementation plan.
- (8) DNPWLM and partners carry out assigned roles and responsibilities.
- (9) DNPWLM and partners review and report back to the joint coordination forum

OBJECTIVE SIX:

Minimise human/elephant conflict

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS:

- (1) Assess possible mechanisms (e.g. barriers and disturbance shooting to balance the cost of living with elephants (eg. revenue generation through hunting quotas, tourism, compensatory fund for elephant-related deaths and disability, etc.).
- (2) Establish DNPWLM guidelines and procedures for problem animal management at all

levels (outline and mandate roles and responsibilities and actions for DNPWLM and other stakeholders).

- (3) Improve capacity to control problem elephants (e.g. training in tracking, the use of high-calibre weapons for humane disposal of problem elephants, communications with local communities).
- (4) Develop policy on disposal of products from problem elephant control.
- (5) Formalise and inform the PAC implementers and the affected partners of the policy (4, above).
- (6) Openly inform partners and stakeholders of these policy decisions at the for a discussed under OBJECTIVE FIVE.
- (7) Link PAC with trophy hunting, where ever possible.
- (8) Establish mechanism for compiling, analysing and interpreting information on human/elephant conflicts (e.g. incidences of human injury and death, loss of crops, physical property or livestock).

OBJECTIVE SEVEN

Improve public awareness of elephant management and conservation issues and the value of elephants (as listed) with activities targeted for domestic, regional and international audiences.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS:

- (1) Develop communication policy for the DNPWLM concerning elephant issues (e.g. with regard to elephant issues and CITES; culling; community participation in elephant management and conservation; local conservation threats and constraints).
- (2) Consult professional public relations practitioners to develop a strategy for meeting this objective.
- (3) Communicate DNPWLM policies to the Zimbabwean public and the international conservation community.

OBJECTIVE EIGHT

Ensure effective trade control measures and enforcement.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS:

- (1) Establish an effective intelligence network (e.g. reward systems; investigations and

prosecutions of wildlife crimes) and maintain records of intelligence information on past offenders.

- (2) Provide in-service training for customs, police, army and DNPWLM personnel in relevant laws and international obligations and their enforcement.
- (3) Maintain effective collaboration and coordination mechanisms between customs, police, army and the DNPWLM (e.g. through establishing a joint commission and a system of cross-referencing intelligence records).
- (4) Strengthen internal trade controls and monitoring (e.g. enforce the system of tracking domestic sales) to detect abuses and prevent the mixing of legal domestic and illegal international trade.
- (5) Ensure adequate staffing and resources (equipment and operating costs) for DNPWLM personnel in the field and intelligence operatives (whether within or outside the DNPWLM).
- (6) Improve coordination and collaboration (within the region and across the continent) on illegal trade monitoring and controls.
- (7) Work with TRAFFIC on improving systems for the monitoring and control of stocks and the obligatory reporting to CITES.
- (8) Establish and maintain formal systems for collecting and reporting all illegal off-take of elephants on an annual basis.
- (9) review and increase penalties for offenders.

OBJECTIVE NINE

Ensure effective implementation, management and monitoring of the plan

Management Actions

- (1) develop a Project Planning Matrix detailing a long term objective, medium term (five year objective), objectively verifiable indicators, assumptions, external factors (factors that are important for Project success but are outside the control of the Project) and the Outputs.
- (2) develop an annual Project Implementation Plan detailing the activities needed for each Output, the milestones for each activity, the Time Frame, the manpower required to carry out each activity, the resources (including costs) required for each activity etc.
- (3) at the end of each year evaluate progress by reviewing the previous annual work plan indicating the state of implementation of each activity, problems faced in the

implementation of each activity, corrective measures taken or to be taken etc.

- (4) about halfway through the Project evaluate success in meeting the Objectives through the degree of achieving indicators.
- (5) evaluate the five year Project.

OBJECTIVE TEN

Liaise with other elephant range states in the region.

Management Actions

- (1) establish a joint coordination forum with neighbouring elephant range states.
- (2) hold annual meetings of the forum for planning of joint elephant related activities, reviewing national plans etc.

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